

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary

Washington, DC 20515-6216

One Hundred Ninth Congress

February 1, 2005

The Honorable Gracia M. Hillman
Chair
U.S. Election Assistance Commission
1225 New York Avenue NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Madam Commissioner:

We are writing to you today to request that the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) study the security and reliability of electronic voting systems, including direct recording electronic (DRE), optical scanners, and punch card readers and assess whether on the whole such machines are preferable to paper ballots and hand counting in any event.

During the November 2004 Presidential election, there were a number of incidents that raised concerns about the performance, reliability and security of the machines. Specifically, we were troubled by the following accounts:

- In Columbus, Ohio, an electronic voting system gave President Bush nearly 4,000 more votes than registered voters.
- In a North Carolina county, more than 4,500 voters were lost because officials mistakenly believed a computer that stores ballots could hold more data than it did.
- In San Francisco, a glitch occurred with voting machines software that resulted in some votes being left uncounted.

In light of these and other incidents, there have been increasing discussions about the security and the need for electronic voting machines. Experts have indicated that voting machine software has security gaps that could potentially allow unscrupulous individuals to alter the vote count without leaving auditable evidence. Still others have questioned whether optical scan machines and DREs hinder an individual's ability to accurately cast a vote and whether the election of the President should rely on possibly faulty electronic devices. As a result, many believe that election systems should not use any machines and instead should simply rely on paper ballot and hand counting. In light of these concerns, we request that the EAC review the security and reliability of electronic voting systems by

- 1) Surveying the problems associated with the electronic voting systems used in federal elections.
- 2) Comparing the security and reliability of electronic voting systems with the security and reliability of other voting systems, including systems that use paper ballots and hand counting.

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- 3) Identifying the significant issues that need to be addressed to improve the security and reliability of electronic voting systems.
- 4) Examining the extent electronic voting systems disrupt the election process.

Because both sides of the aisle have indicated that voting reform is a priority issue, and many states and localities are also in the processes of reviewing their voting machine needs, we would like this study be conducted with the highest priority. Please contact Michone Johnson (202-225-6906) to follow-up on this request.

Thank you and we look forward to working with you on this vital and urgent matter.

Sincerely,

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